



Biden announces heavy artillery, other weapons for Ukraine

By A. MADHANI, R. BURNS
and D. SUPERVILLE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden pledged an additional \$1.3 billion Thursday for new weapons and economic assistance to help Ukraine in its strong but increasingly difficult battle against the Russian invasion, and he promised to seek much more from Congress to keep the guns, ammunition and cash flowing. The latest military aid, Biden said, will be sent "directly to the front lines of freedom." "Putin is banking on us losing interest," Biden said. The Russian president is betting that "Western unity will crack ... and once

again we're going to prove him wrong." The new package includes \$800 million in military aid for much-needed heavy artillery, 144,000 rounds of ammunition and drones for the escalating battle in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. It builds on roughly \$2.6 billion in military assistance that Biden previously approved. There's also a fresh \$500 million in direct economic assistance to Ukraine for government salaries, pensions and other programs. That raises the total U.S. economic support to \$1 billion since Russia's invasion began nearly two months ago.

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President Joe Biden returns a salute as he walks from Marine One to board Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Thursday, April 21, 2022, en route to Portland, Ore.

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Biden announces heavy artillery, other weapons for Ukraine

Continued from Front

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his gratitude but said his nation needs ever more — up to \$7 billion each month to make up for economic losses in addition to weapons and money for the continuing war.

With tens of thousands of buildings damaged and key infrastructure in ruins, “we will need hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild,” Zelenskyy said, addressing the World Bank meeting in Washington virtually.

Biden underscored a need for the United States and Western allies to remain resolved in their support for Ukraine amid signs that Americans may becoming more wary of the war.

A poll published Thursday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows Americans’ desire to get involved has waned somewhat. Some 32% say the U.S. should have a major role in the conflict. That’s ticked down from 40% last month, though it’s slightly higher than the 26% who said so in February. An additional 49% say the U.S. should have a minor role.

The president also announced that Russian-affiliated ships would be barred from U.S. ports, though that appeared to be largely symbolic. Russian ships bring a tiny amount of the cargo unloaded in the U.S., and “my guess is that ... a decent chunk of that was tankers transporting Russian oil which is now banned anyway,” said Colin Grabow, a research fellow who studies trade at the Cato Institute.

Overall, Biden said that \$6.5 billion in security assistance that Congress approved last month as part of a \$13.6 billion package for Ukraine could soon be “exhausted.” With the latest announcement, Biden has approved about \$3.4 billion in military aid since Feb. 24. Congress’ overall total also included about \$6.8 billion in direct economic assistance to care for refugees and provide



Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, left, speaks while meeting with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi of Calif., Thursday, April 21, 2022, at the Capitol in Washington.

Associated Press

economic aid to allies in the region impacted by the war — and additional funding for federal agencies to enforce economic sanctions against Russia and protect against cyber threats.

“Next week, I’m going to have to be sending to Congress a supplemental budget request to keep weapons and ammunition deployed without interruption,” Biden said.

Congress has signaled it is receptive to further requests and has been expecting there would be a need for further help for the Ukrainians. But the issue could become entwined with partisan fights over pandemic spending and immigration, complicating the pathway.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has expressed a willingness to consider more aid for Ukraine in recent weeks. “I think we need to say we want the Ukrainians to win, and we’re prepared to do everything we can to help them win,” McConnell said Monday in Shelbyville, Kentucky.

“We want to do more,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters at the Capitol, during an appearance with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. She said lawmakers would learn more about Biden’s latest funding re-

quest “in the next day or so, to be taken up as soon as we can. Next week.”

Biden spoke on the new assistance, and more broadly about the situation in Ukraine, hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed victory in the strategic city of Mariupol. Putin, however, ordered his troops not to risk more losses by storming the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance in the war’s iconic battleground.

Biden in an exchange with reporters following his remarks called Russia’s claim on Mariupol “questionable.”

Russian forces have destroyed much of southeastern port city, which has witnessed some of the fiercest fighting of the war. By Russian estimates, about 2,000 Ukrainian forces remain holed up in a sprawling steel plant, even as Russia continues to pound the industrial site and issue ultimatums for surrender.

Biden sought to make clear to Russians that plenty more military assistance for Ukraine would be coming. “Sometimes we will speak softly and carry a large Javelin, because we’re sending a lot of those,” Biden said, paraphrasing Theodore Roosevelt and referring to an anti-tank missile system.

The new U.S. military assistance is to include 72

155mm howitzers, 144,000 artillery rounds, 72 vehicles used to tow to the howitzers onto battlefields, and over 121 Phoenix Ghost tactical drones, as well as field equipment and spare parts.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said the drones were developed by the Air Force in specific response to Ukrainian needs and produced by a U.S. company, Aevex Aerospace, but he would not say whether the program began before Russia started its invasion Feb. 24. Kirby said the Phoenix Ghost is similar to the armed Switchblade kamikaze drones that the Pentagon already is providing to Ukraine.

The 72 howitzers are in addition to the 18 announced last week the U.S. was transferring to Ukraine.

Biden’s decision to quadruple the number pledged in an arms package announced just last week reflects what is shaping up as a major ground battle in the contested Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

The Russians have been deploying additional artillery there in recent days as they aim to expand their offensive and attempt to take full control of the Donbas after retreating from a failed attempt to capture Kyiv, the capital. Heavy weaponry like artillery is expected to play a key role in

the fighting in the relatively confined area where Ukrainian and Russian-backed separatists have been battling since 2014.

The announcements on new aid came against the backdrop of International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings this week dominated by how to manage the spillover from Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Ahead of his remarks, Biden met with Ukrainian Prime Minister Shmyhal. The Ukrainian leader also met on Thursday with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen as well as Pelosi.

Kristalina Georgieva, the International Monetary Fund’s managing director, said at a news conference on Wednesday that Ukraine’s financial ministry officials have estimated they will need \$5 billion in international assistance per month for the coming months to help cover essential government services and keep the country’s economy going.

Before Biden’s public remarks, the president met with Ukrainian Prime Minister Shmyhal. The Ukrainian leader also met with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen as well as Pelosi.

Yellen at a news conference said the economic aid the U.S. and allies have sent “is only the beginning of what Ukraine will need to rebuild.” She added that she’d be discussing efforts to further aid Ukraine with her Western counterparts this week.

“I think we stand united in recognizing we’ve got to find ways to meet Ukraine’s needs,” she said.

The Biden administration also announced a new program Thursday aimed at streamlining refugee applications for Ukrainians and others fleeing the fighting, while they are still in Europe. The U.S. will no longer routinely grant entry to those who show up at the U.S.-Mexico border seeking asylum, as thousands have. The U.S. expects to admit up to 100,000 refugees from Ukraine and about 15,000 have come, mostly through Mexico. □

Court upholds Puerto Ricans' exclusion from benefits program

By **MARK SHERMAN**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court has upheld the differential treatment of residents of Puerto Rico, ruling that Congress was within its power to exclude them from a benefits program that's available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The court held by an 8-1 vote Thursday that making Puerto Ricans ineligible for the Supplemental Security Income program, which provides benefits to older, disabled and blind Americans, did not unconstitutionally discriminate against them. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, whose parents were born in Puerto Rico, was the lone dissenter. Writing for the court, Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the court was bound by a pair of earlier rulings that already upheld the federal law that created SSI and excluded Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories from it. Congress later added in the Mariana Islands.

Puerto Rico has been a U.S. territory since the Spanish American War in 1898, and its residents are U.S. citizens. They can vote in primaries, but not the presidential election, and have limited representation in Congress. Many also do not pay federal income tax.



An American flag blows in the wind in front of the Supreme Court building on Capitol Hill in Washington, Nov. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

Kavanaugh wrote that "just as not every federal tax extends to residents of Puerto Rico, so too not every federal benefits program extends to residents of Puerto Rico." In dissent, Sotomayor responded, "In my view, there is no rational basis for Congress to treat needy citizens living anywhere in the United States so differently from others. To hold otherwise, as the Court does, is irrational and antithetical to the very nature of the SSI program and the equal protection of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution.

I respectfully dissent." The decision outraged many in Puerto Rico including Gov. Pedro Pierluisi, who said statehood is the only solution to Puerto Rico's second-class status. "The decision ... once again confirms that the territorial status of Puerto Rico is discriminatory for the island's U.S. citizens and allows Congress to do what it wants with us," he said in a statement. Pierluisi noted that Puerto Rico also receives unequal treatment when it comes to Medicaid, Medicare and

other federal programs. Meanwhile, Jenniffer González, Puerto Rico's representative in Congress and a member of Pierluisi's pro-statehood party, called the exclusion an "unbelievable discrimination" that keeps more than 300,000 people in extreme poverty. Jose Luis Vaello-Madero, the Puerto Rico resident at the center of the case, began receiving SSI payments after he suffered a series of strokes while living in New York. The payments continued to his bank ac-

count in New York even after he moved back to Puerto Rico. When he notified the Social Security Administration, the payments stopped and then the government sued to recover more than \$28,000 it said he was not entitled to. Lower courts sided with Vaello-Madero, ruling that the exclusion of Puerto Rico from the SSI program is unconstitutional. In a similar case in Guam, a federal judge ruled recently that residents of that Pacific island also should be able to collect SSI.

The Justice Department first filed its appeal of a ruling by the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals during the Trump administration but maintained the case even after President Joe Biden took office.

The Biden administration has said it supports changing the law to extend SSI payments to Puerto Rico. It included a provision in its Build Back Better proposal to make residents of U.S. territories eligible for SSI payments, but the legislation is stalled in Congress.

A separate program, Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled, covers residents of the territories, but it has more stringent eligibility requirements and pays less generous benefits than SSI. □



In this May 8, 2019, photo Arizona House Speaker Rusty Bowers, R-Mesa, speaks at the Arizona Capitol in Phoenix.

Associated Press

By **BOB CHRISTIE**

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona's Republican House speaker on Thursday was named one of five recipients of the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage award for his refusal to consider overturn-

ing the 2020 election results despite massive pressure from former President Donald Trump and his supporters. Speaker Rusty Bowers rebuffed repeated direct efforts by Trump, his attorney Rudy Giuliani and others to overturn results that

Arizona House speaker gets Profile in Courage award

saw President Joe Biden narrowly defeat Trump in Arizona. Trump and Giuliani urged Bowers in a phone call to retroactively change Arizona law to allow the Legislature to choose a different slate of presidential electors than those picked by the voters.

"I am very grateful for this honor yet cannot help but feel undeserving of it," Bowers said in a statement. "Honoring my oath and the people's choices at the ballot box are not heroic acts — they are the least that Arizonans should expect from the people

elected to serve them." The award created by Kennedy's family in 1989 is designed "to recognize and celebrate the quality of political courage that he admired most," and is given each year to one or more political figures.

This year's award honors those who showed "courage to protect and defend democracy in the United States and abroad." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be honored for his effort to rally his nation and the world against the Russian invasion.

Besides Bowers, the other

American honorees are Republican Wyoming U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney, Democratic Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Fulton County, Georgia, elections department employee Wandrea "Shaye" Moss.

All but Zelenskyy were honored for standing up to pressure from Trump and his supporters who alleged without evidence that he lost to Democratic President Joe Biden because of election fraud. Benson and Moss were targets of vicious attacks for their work on the election. □

13 Nassar victims seeking \$130M from FBI over bungled probe

By ED WHITE

Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Thirteen sexual assault victims of Larry Nassar are seeking \$10 million each from the FBI, claiming a bungled investigation by agents led to more abuse by the sports doctor, lawyers said Thursday.

It's an effort to make the government responsible for assaults that occurred after July 2015. The Justice Department's inspector general concluded that the FBI made fundamental errors when it became aware of allegations against Nassar that year. Nassar was a Michigan State University sports doctor as well as a doctor at USA Gymnastics. He is serving decades in prison for assaulting female athletes, including medal-winning Olympic gymnasts. "This was not a case involving fake 20 dollar bills or tax cheats," attorney Jamie White said. "These were allegations of a serial rapist who was known to the FBI as the Olympic U.S. doctor with unfettered access to young women."

Nassar, he added, continued a "reign of terror for 17 unnecessary months."



In this Feb. 5, 2018 file photo, Larry Nassar, former sports doctor who admitted molesting some of the nation's top gymnasts, appears in Eaton County Court in Charlotte, Mich.

Indianapolis-based USA Gymnastics told local FBI agents in 2015 that three gymnasts said they were assaulted by Nassar. But the FBI did not open a formal investigation or inform federal or state authorities in Michigan, according to the inspector general's report.

Los Angeles FBI agents in 2016 began a sexual tourism investigation against Nassar and interviewed several victims but also didn't alert Michigan authorities, the inspector gen-

eral said.

"No one should have been assaulted after the summer of 2015 because the FBI should have done its job," said Grace French, founder of a group called The Army of Survivors. "To know that the FBI could have helped to avoid this trauma disgusts me."

White is not suing the FBI yet. Under federal law, tort claims must be a filed with a government agency, which then has six months to reply. A lawsuit could follow, depending on the FBI's

response.

The FBI declined to comment Thursday but referred to Director Christopher Wray's remarks to Congress about how the matter was poorly handled.

"I'm sorry that so many different people let you down, over and over again," Wray told victims at a Senate hearing last year. "And I'm especially sorry that there were people at the FBI who had their own chance to stop this monster back in 2015 and failed. And that's inexcusable. It never should

have happened."

White said more than 100 women were assaulted after July 2015, and he expects other lawyers will file claims against the FBI. Nassar wasn't arrested until November 2016 during an investigation by Michigan State University police.

The Michigan attorney general's office ultimately handled the assault charges against Nassar, while federal prosecutors in Grand Rapids, Michigan, filed a child pornography case.

White noted the 2018 massacre at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The FBI received a tip about five weeks before 17 people were killed at the school, but the tip was never forwarded to the FBI's South Florida office. The government agreed to pay \$127.5 million to families of those killed or injured. Michigan State University, which was also accused of missing chances over many years to stop Nassar, agreed to pay \$500 million to more than 300 women and girls who were assaulted. USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee made a \$380 million settlement. □



In this July 17, 2017, photo, escort volunteers line up outside the EMW Women's Surgical Center in Louisville, Ky., the state's only abortion clinic.

Associated Press

By BRUCE SCHREINER

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday temporarily blocked a state law that effectively eliminated abortions in Kentucky after the state's two remaining clinics said they couldn't meet its requirements.

The decision by U.S. District

Judge Rebecca Grady Jennings was a victory for abortion rights advocates and a setback for the Republican-led legislature, which passed the law in March and then overrode Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's veto of the measure last week. One of the clinics said Thursday that it would immediately resume

Kentucky abortion law blocked in win for clinics

abortion services.

The new law bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy and requires women to be examined by a doctor before receiving abortion pills. It also contains new reporting requirements that the Kentucky clinics said they couldn't immediately comply with. Noncompliance can result in stiff fines and felony penalties.

Jennings' order did not delve into the larger issue of the new law's constitutionality. Instead, it focused on the clinics' claims that they're unable to comply with the measure because the state hasn't yet set up clear guidelines.

Jennings, who was appointed by former President Donald Trump, said she decided to block the

entire law because she lacked information "to specifically determine which individual provisions and subsections are capable of compliance."

Abortion rights activists said they were relieved by the decision but noted more rounds are ahead in the legal fight. "This is a win, but it is only the first step," said Rebecca Gibron, the CEO for Planned Parenthood in Kentucky, where its clinic is immediately resuming abortion services. "We're prepared to fight for our patients' right to basic health in court and to continue doing everything in our power to ensure abortion access is permanently secured in Kentucky."

Supporters say the goal of Kentucky's new law is to

protect women's health and strengthen oversight. Opponents say the objective all along was to stop abortions in the state completely.

Kentucky is among the GOP-led states that have passed restrictive abortion laws in anticipation of a U.S. Supreme Court decision that could reverse the landmark Roe v. Wade decision that established a right to abortion nationwide nearly 50 years ago. Pending before the high court is a challenge to a law passed in a fifth state, Mississippi, that bans abortion after 15 weeks. The court has indicated that it will allow Mississippi's ban to stand and conservative justices have suggested they support overruling Roe. □

U.K. lawmakers OK probe into PM Boris Johnson's alleged lies

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British lawmakers on Thursday ordered a parliamentary investigation into Prime Minister Boris Johnson for allegedly lying about whether he broke coronavirus restrictions by attending illegal gatherings during the pandemic.

The move, approved by cries of "aye" and without a formal vote in the House of Commons, means Parliament's Committee of Privileges will investigate whether Johnson knowingly misled Parliament historically a resigning offense if proven.

The probe piles more pressure on a Conservative prime minister whose grip on power has been shaken by claims he flouted the pandemic rules he imposed on the country, then repeatedly failed to own up to it.

The move was instigated by the opposition Labour Party and passed after the government abandoned efforts to get Conservative lawmakers to block it. Johnson's Conservatives have a substantial majority in Parliament, but many lawmakers are uneasy with the prime minister's behavior.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, center, poses with Sadhus, or Hindu holy men, in front of the Swaminarayan Akshardham temple, in Gandhinagar, part of his two-day trip to India, Thursday, April 21, 2022.

Associated Press

ior.

Labour leader Keir Starmer said the move sought to uphold "the simple principle that honesty, integrity and telling the truth matter in our politics."

"It is a British principle ... guiding members from every political party in this House," Starmer said. "But it is a principle under attack." Johnson was not present for the decision on a scandal that has rocked his leadership of the country and the Conservative Party.

He was more than 4,000 miles (6,400 kilometers) away in India, insisting he wanted to "get on with the job" of leading the country. Johnson was fined 50 pounds (\$66) by police last week for attending his own birthday party in his office in June 2020, when people in Britain were barred from meeting up with friends and family, or even visiting

dying relatives. Johnson is the first British prime minister ever found to have broken the law while in office.

He has apologized, but denied he knowingly broke the rules. Johnson's shifting defense initially saying there were no illegal gatherings, then claiming it "did not occur to me" that the birthday event was a party has drawn derision and outrage from opponents, who have called for him to

quit.

"The truth is simple and it's this he lied to avoid getting caught, and once he got caught, he lied again," Scottish National Party lawmaker Ian Blackford said in the House of Commons.

Usually lawmakers are forbidden from accusing one another of lying, but Blackford was not reprimanded by the Speaker.

A growing number of Conservatives are uncomfortable about defending a leader who broke rules he imposed on the country. A few have called openly for Johnson to go, and the number is rising. Others are waiting to see whether public anger translates into Conservative losses at local elections on May 5.

"It is utterly depressing to be asked to defend the indefensible," said Conservative legislator William Wragg. "Each time part of us withers."

Lawmaker Steve Baker, until now a prominent supporter, said that Johnson "should be long gone" for violating the "letter and spirit" of the rules."

The Committee of Privileges probe will not start until twin police and civil-service investigations into "party-gate" have concluded. □

U.N. court: Colombia infringed Nicaragua's rights in Caribbean

By MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The United Nations' highest court ruled Thursday that Colombia breached Nicaragua's rights in waters of the Caribbean Sea, including by hindering Nicaraguan fishing vessels and granting fishing permits for Colombian and other boats.

The majority ruling of the International Court of Justice gave Nicaragua a victory

in a lengthy legal battle, although it may not fully end the dispute between the two Latin American nations. Nicaragua filed the case in 2013, claiming that Colombia violated its sovereignty in the western Caribbean, a region of the sea long claimed by both countries that is home to a UNESCO-listed biosphere reserve inhabited by dozens of endangered species.

In a 9-6 vote, the world court ruled that Colombia "must immediately cease the conduct," ICJ President Jean E. Donoghue said during a public reading of the decision. The judges voted 10-5 to establish that Colombia infringed Nicaragua's rights "by interfering with fishing and marine scientific research activities" of Nicaraguan or Nicaraguan-licensed vessels and with naval activities "and by purporting to enforce conservation measures" in Nicaragua's waters.

Colombia said the ruling had positives for Bogota, despite imposing limits on its naval activities. "They limited some of its functions in the sense that they cannot undertake environmental control activities, which is a shame because we do have the ability to do that," Colombia's representative to the court, Carlos Gustavo Arieta Padilla, told reporters. "But nevertheless, the court maintained the possibility of the Colombian navy being there and doing operations in the fight against or-

ganized crime in the area." A 2012 ruling by the world court gave Nicaragua fishing rights over much of the western Caribbean, but Colombia's navy has continued to patrol the waters, which are also used by traffickers to smuggle drugs into Central America.

At hearings last year, Nicaragua argued that Colombian naval ships were infringing on its fishing rights by patrolling the area that the court had awarded to Nicaragua as an "exclusive economic zone."

The country also alleged that Colombia's navy has dissuaded vessels with Nicaraguan fishing permits from operating in the area while providing protection to vessels with Colombian permits. □



Exterior view of the International Court of Justice, or World Court, in The Hague, Netherlands, Friday, Feb. 2, 2018.

Associated Press

Blasts across Afghanistan kill at least 10, injure dozens

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

A series of explosions across Afghanistan on Thursday killed at least 10 people and wounded scores more, according to police and hospital officials.

No one immediately took responsibility for the deadly explosions, but they mostly targeted the country's minority Shiite Muslims and had all the hallmarks of a deadly Islamic State affiliate known as Islamic State in Khorasan Province, or IS-K. The worst of the three attacks occurred in northern Mazar-e-Sharif where at least 10 worshippers were killed as they knelt in prayer, said Dr. Ghawsuddin Anwari, head of the main hospital in northern Mazar-e-Sharif. Another 40 were injured. They were brought in ambulances and private cars.

The explosion at the Sai Doken mosque in northern Mazar-e-Sharif occurred as Muslims mark the holy month of Ramadan, when the faithful fast from sunrise to sunset.

Earlier Thursday in the capital, Kabul, a roadside bomb exploded and injured two



This frame grab image from video, shows upper floor window blown out after a bomb explosion inside a mosque, in Mazar-e-Sharif province, Afghanistan, Thursday, April 21, 2022

Associated Press

children. That bomb also targeted the country's minority Shiites, striking in the Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood of Kabul, dominated by Afghanistan's minority Shiite Muslims.

Two days earlier in the same area, multiple explosions targeting educational institutions killed at least six people, mostly children, and wounded 17 others.

A third explosion Thursday, this one in northern

Kunduz province, struck a vehicle carrying mechanics contracted by the ruling Taliban, according to Matiullah Rohani, head of information and culture in Kunduz province.

Thursday's series of deadly explosions comes after months of relative calm in Afghanistan and after a crackdown against the IS-K by the country's Taliban rulers in the first months following their sweep to power.

The IS affiliate, which has been operating in Afghanistan since 2014, is seen as the greatest security challenge facing the country's Taliban rulers. Following their August takeover, the Taliban launched a sweeping crackdown against the IS headquarters in eastern Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, advocates for the minority Hazaras called for a stop to the killings. Hazaras, who make up around

9% of the population of Afghanistan's 36 million people, stand alone in being targeted because of their ethnicity distinct from the other ethnic groups, such as Tajik and Uzbek and the Pashtun majority and their religion. Most Hazaras are Shiite Muslims, despised by Sunni Muslim radicals like the Islamic State group, and discriminated against by many in the Sunni-majority country.

The Islamic State affiliate has previously targeted schools, particularly in the Shiite-dominated Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood. In May last year, months before the Taliban took power in Kabul, more than 60 children, mostly girls, were killed when two bombs were detonated outside their school, also in the Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood.

Dasht-e-Barchi and other parts of western Kabul are houses to the Shiite minorities of Afghanistan which have mostly been targeted by the Islamic State affiliate loyalists, however, no one has claimed credit for the recent explosions. □

China's Xi urges talks to settle disputes, opposes sanctions

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Thursday said his government supports talks to resolve international disputes and opposes "wanton use" of sanctions.

Xi's remarks confirm that China is sticking to its stance

of refusing to criticize Russia's invasion of Ukraine despite the conflict's toll on the Ukrainian population and global security.

Beijing has refused to call the conflict an invasion and said Russia was provoked by NATO's expansion.

Despite that, Xi said China remains "committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries" and non-interference in their internal affairs. "We stay committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation, support all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises, reject double standards, and oppose the wanton use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction," Xi said in a televised address to an international forum in the southern island province of Hainan.

China has abstained or voted with Russia on recent proposals brought before the United Nations, and China's state-controlled media have amplified Russian disinformation about

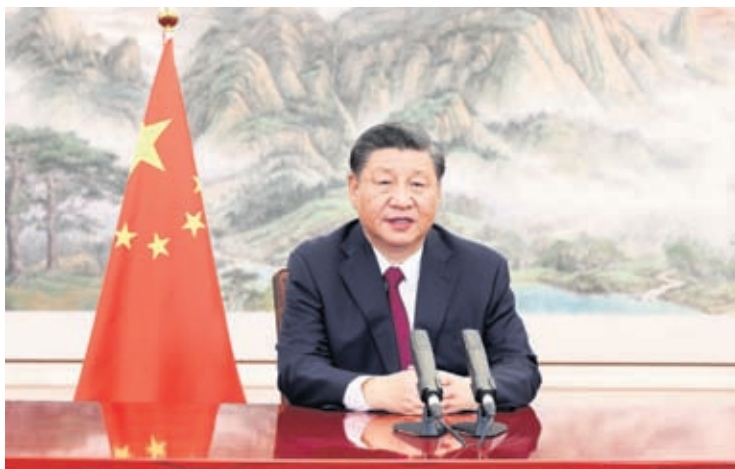
Ukraine staging attacks and producing biological weapons with U.S. cooperation. Xi met with Putin in Beijing less than a month before Russia launched its Feb. 24 invasion, with the two sides issuing a joint statement affirming their "no limits" relationship.

China has maintained its support for Moscow despite possible war crimes committed by Russian troops and says it maintains normal economic ties between the countries despite the imposition of economic sanctions by other nations.

China is also believed to be studying the Ukraine crisis for how it might later affect its policy toward Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy it threatens to invade to bring it under its own control. Taiwan and China split during a

civil war in 1949, but China claims the island as its own territory. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Wednesday spoke with his Chinese counterpart for the first time since becoming Pentagon chief more than a year ago, breaking a communications impasse that American officials saw as increasingly dangerous. Austin, who calls China the U.S. military's leading long-term challenge but has been forced to focus heavily on Russia this year, requested the telephone conversation with Gen.

At a daily briefing Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said China has "always opposed unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction that lack a basis in international law and are not authorized by the (United Nations) Security Council." □



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, Chinese president Xi Jinping delivers a speech via video link to the opening ceremony of the Bo'ao Forum For Asia in Bo'ao in southern China's Hainan Province, Thursday, April 21, 2022.

Associated Press

Nicaragua tightens grip on universities to stifle dissent

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Four years after university students led protests against Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, his government is minimizing chances of a reoccurrence by seizing a dozen private universities and closing them or shifting control to the state.

A generation of students who participated in the April 2018 protests saw their education interrupted. Many were forced into hiding, jailed or exiled when Ortega's police cracked down. Now others who managed to resume their studies worry they won't be able to finish or have finished but can't find work because the now state-run schools haven't given them diplomas.

The seizure of the private universities in recent months and the passage of education reforms that increase state control are the latest examples of Ortega's relentless pursuit of those he believes conspired to try to overthrow his government. "In April 2018, the regime took the repression to limits never seen in recent years," said Ernesto Medina, who led American University in Managua for 11 years until the end of 2018 and who is in exile in Germany. "That's



Demonstrators protest outside the Jesuit-run Universidad Centroamericana, UCA, demanding the university's allocation of its share of 6% of the national budget in Managua, Nicaragua, Aug. 2, 2018. The sign reads in Spanish "Daniel and Somoza are the same thing!," referring to dictator Anastasio Somoza and current President Daniel Ortega.

Associated Press

when we realized that Ortega would not stop until he punished the universities and the students."

A request for comment to first lady and Vice President Rosario Murillo, who is also the government's spokeswoman, was not answered. Earlier this year, dozens of leading opposition figures were tried, convicted and sentenced for allegedly trying to destabilize Ortega's government. Nongovernmental organizations that

worked on a range of issues were closed — including 25 more on Wednesday — along with independent media outlets.

The Sandinista-controlled congress in late March passed reforms to two education laws that reduce university autonomy and increase government control, experts say. The changes also cut government funding to the Jesuit-led Central American University in Managua, an-

other center of protest in April 2018. Those government funds had been used to offer scholarships to low-income students.

Ortega has sought "revenge" against the schools, Medina said. "Ortega's objective is to consolidate the government's and the Sandinista Front's political control over universities."

Ortega recognizes how university campuses can generate social upheaval. Many of the Sandinista

guerrillas who fought beside him to overthrow dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 came from the universities as leaders of similar movements in Latin America and around the world have. Nicaraguan universities lost their autonomy temporarily after the revolution as well when the junta that governed the transition chose university administrators.

"We were responsible for that abuse and now we are paying for it," said Medina, who at that time supported the Sandinistas.

Of the 12 universities seized, seven are based in Nicaragua and five were the virtual campuses of foreign universities. In each case, congress alleged administrative failures and financial incompliance as justification for the seizures.

The universities' property was transferred to the state and three new large universities with a combined enrollment of 18,000 were created using that infrastructure. For weeks in 2018, students occupied Nicaragua Polytechnic University in Managua, fearful they would be killed if they left. There were frequent skirmishes with police and Sandinista youth. They treated their wounded while trying to coordinate with students at other universities. □

Haiti grounds private flights amid probe into deadly crash

By DÁNICA COTO and
EVENS SANON
Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Haiti's National Civil Aviation Office announced Thursday that it is banning all private aircraft from flying during an investigation into the crash of a small plane that killed at least five people and injured several others. Authorities did not say when private flights could resume, adding that the measure is part of a review of private operators. The announcement was made a day after a Cessna 207 crashed into a truck transporting sodas in the crowded capital of

Port-au-Prince. A police official told The Associated Press that five people died upon impact, including the truck driver. "I heard a big boom," said Jean Felix Surin, a farmer who rushed out of his house to the scene of the crash. "Everybody was in shock."

Someone in the crowd said one of the victims asked for help while still on the ground but died shortly afterward. Hours later, firefighters used hoses to clean the site.

The Haitian newspaper Le Nouvelliste reported that the pilot died after being taken to a hospital.

The pilot was identified as

Amado Gutiérrez from the Dominican Republic and carried a badge belonging to a Dominican flight school called Enalas. A secretary at the school said no one was immediately available for comment.

Officials said the plane was en route to the southern coastal city of Jacmel and crashed shortly after taking off from Port-au-Prince.

The crash comes four months after Haiti's Civil Aviation Security Department issued a notice warning that several private operators it did not identify had been breaking rules by running commercial flights, among other things, with-



Onlookers mill around the wreckage of a small plane that crashed in the community of Carrefour, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, April 20, 2022. Onlookers mill around the wreckage of a small plane that crashed in the community of Carrefour, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

Associated Press

out the required license. Last July, another small plane also en route to Jacmel crashed near the capital, killing six people, including two U.S. missionaries. Some people in recent

months have opted to fly from the capital to Haiti's southern region to avoid driving through gang-controlled areas that have seen a spike in kidnappings and killings. □

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ORANJESTAD — 2021 was the official Grand Opening of Harbour House Aruba. The residence consisting of 94 units is located in the former Mar Azul building, right in the heart of Oranjestad. The two brothers Irwin J. Perret-Gentil and Alberto Perret-Gentil from PERING, one of the largest, privately-owned Real Es-

tate and construction firms in Venezuela and Aruba, officially opened their new jewel in the presence of the invitees.

Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 de-

Harbour House Aruba officially open! 80 % sold, construction in final phase: Harbour House Aruba is ready for you!

grees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool with a panorama on the harbour.

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates



on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 50.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. Harbour House Aruba assist also in financing by banks. For more information: <https://harbourhousearuba.com>.

Hottest condo in town

Aruba Today talked to one of the owners from New York: "This is going to be the hottest condo building on the island because this is the very first thing people see when they arrive here by cruise ship and it is the only one combining the ocean, port and city. We feel so happy to be the owner here, also, the organization is amazing. We are being accommodated in every way, the attention you get is extraordinary."

Boardwalk

Living here includes being part of Oranjestad and all its benefits. Around the Harbour House building a boardwalk is constructed allowing you to stroll along the waterfront and enjoy a drink on a terrace or dive into the art gallery, souvenir store or even have dinner facing the atmospheric harbour of Oranjestad. The process of purchase is easy, whether you are

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How it all began

It was 1938 when Mr. Eric Ponson started his journey at General Store. Ponson did not hesitate and decided to buy General Store. Buying a store and thus going from employee to owner of a business with a debt of 11.000 guilders was not an easy task.

As the saying goes: "Behind every successful man, is a strong woman". In the case of Ponson, this was no different. As General Store progressed and slowly became successful, Mrs. Irene Ponson, came in to assist her husband. Irene Ponson is a visionary, she knew exactly where and how to invest and within a short amount of time in 1970, General Store moved to a better location at the Steenweg. This aloud for a lot more merchandize, products and employees. Supply and demand was as such, that General Store became the number 1 electrical business. Business kept going so well that the location at the Steenweg became too small and was moved later to Dakota Shopping Paradise and later to Pedro Gallegostraat. With this move, an expansion

was decided upon and an electronics store in Savaneta was opened. General Store still being very successful was ready for more growth.

Ricky, Kenneth, Corine and Frans are the fruits of this marriage. Kenneth and Frans however, decided to further develop their father's legacy and continued with their mother's dream to expand the business. An expansion not in square feet only, but in merchandize as well. A great opportunity presented itself when the Ponson family was able to buy a piece of property across from the airport. In 2007 the Ponson family moved into their brand new and huge building. Ponson's General Store now had an electrical department, as housewares department, a paint department and a hardware department.

After a successful opening and expansion, Kenneth and Frans who inherited their mothers vision, decided that General Store was ready for yet another expansion. With the support of Mr. Tom Barfell and management of Do it Best in the States, the construction of Do it Center commenced. Fast forward to today. A Do it Center in Aruba, with more than 50.000 top of the line items for interior as well exterior use, building materials, STO products and a top of the line grocery store. Perseverance, responsibility, vision and the courage to invest have made Pon-

son's General Store as successful as it is today.

Super Do It Center Shaba & Groceries

Located in Shaba, Noord. This is the last sibling of the Do It Center family. Here you will be able to find anything you are looking for. The building is divided into several departments from home to hardware to groceries. Everything under one roof.

Groceries? Visit the fully stocked supermarket with fresh fruits and vegetables and high class meat selections. Highly known products and brands are here for you to grab. Every week Do It Center Groceries offers you great discount on selected items. Weekly specials are very popular and a perfect chance for you to buy your favorite products at a reduced price. Need a home makeover? Do not skip the furniture department "Leenbakker". Here, you will find a divine collection of European furniture, worldwide known for their modern and stylish features for your bedroom, bathroom, living room or kitchen. For your garden they have a wide selection of durable furniture specially made for our tropical climate. Take a walk around and find some treasures. Find the perfect accessory for your house, fitted for your personality and style. Modern, elegant, retro industrial, whatever your style is you will definitely find something for your personal taste.

Feeling hungry? Take a



break and relax at the 'Deli'. Savor a delicious lunch or a sandwich with a cup of coffee or perhaps a wrap. If you are a sweet tooth you will not be able to just skip the great variety of desserts they have. So tempting!

Do it Center Shaba is open from Monday to Saturday from 8AM to 8PM and on Sunday's from 9AM to 6PM.

For more information go to www.doit.aw □

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Travellers' Choice 2020



Our Planet Earth and all of its inhabitants, human, animal, vegetable and micro organism species are under extreme pressure, facing multiple threats.

From climate change, sea level rise, desertification and scarcity of freshwater, loss of agricultural land, ocean pollution, to the increase of diseases resistant to antibiotics, the growing surge of diseases jumping from animals and insects to humans, because of habitat loss, ecosystem degradation, and an alarming rate of vital ecosystems loss and species extinction due to human activity.

The global and national economies have barely begun to recover from the devastating impacts from the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has drastically reduced the capacity of many nations to reboot and grow their economies to create new jobs, provide basic services to their citizens, reduce poverty, improve national health infrastructures, and create conditions through education, innovation, science and technology for diversified economies, with built-in resilience, and the capacity to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and set goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The conflict in Ukraine has created new problems from acute shortages of fossil fuel energy resources, to a massive surge in refugees, and a growing food shortage and rapid increase in agricultural commodities prices, resulting from the loss of fertilizer (component) exports and staple food products, such as wheat and cereals and edible oils, of which both Ukraine and Russia are major exporters. Even all of the industries that incorporate microchips in their products are impacted by the war in Ukraine.

All of this is causing serious setbacks in meeting climate goals, the Sustainable Development Goals and protection of biodiversity and ecosystems worldwide, some of which

Global announcement of start of annual campaign for sustainable development “EIGHT TO EIGHT, Because Our Planet Can’t Wait”

are vital to global food security and health. Unfortunately our planet can’t wait, because if we humans fall behind on meeting urgent deadlines, it will be too late for all of Planet Earth.

The United Nations and Earth Day Network for 2022 have picked as a theme “Invest in Our Planet” for Mother Earth Day, aka as Earth Day to emphasize the need to get everyone, and the corporate sector and governments in particular to start investing time, money and joint efforts to save the planet. Earth Day isn’t enough and that is why Rainbow Warriors Core Foundation has created a new annual campaign which runs from April 8 all the way through June 8, called “Eight to Eight, Because Our Planet Can’t Wait”

Focus and showcase for small island developing states

Aruba is home to the University of Aruba, which has a unique SISSTEM faculty, that focuses on Small Island Solutions through Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and is based on a European Union funded collaboration with the University of Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium. Aruba is also home to a unique blend of fundamental and applied research foundations, and a growing number of initiatives in citizens’ science and innovation, new agricultural technologies and a sizable investment in wind and solar energy projects.

This in combination with our ties to the European Union through the Kingdom of The Netherlands makes Aruba uniquely qualified to showcase efforts and technologies to solve problems that Small Island Developing States face, but also to translate these into solutions for global use.

Eight To Eight, Because Our Planet Can’t Wait

The campaign runs annually from April 8, through June 8. It has a threefold focus.

International and United Nations decades It will address the following:

1. International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)
2. UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030)
3. UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)
4. UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)
5. UN Decade of Family Farming (Smallholder, Small Scale Farming, 2019-2028)
6. International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” (2018-2028)
7. UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)
8. UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024)

International years

This will cover:

1. International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development (2022)
2. International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022)

International days

1. International Day of Human Space Flight, April 12
2. World Creativity and Innovation Day, April 21
3. Mother Earth Day/ Earth Day, April 22
4. World Book and Copyright Day, April 23
5. World Day for Safety and Health at Work, April 28
6. World Press Freedom Day, May 3
7. World Migratory Bird Day, May 14
8. World Telecommunications and Information Society Day, May 17
9. World Bee Day, May 20
10. International Day for Biological Diversity, May 22
11. World Bicycle Day, June 3
12. World Environment Day, and International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, June 5
13. World Food Safety (and Food Security) Day, June 7
14. World Oceans Day, June 8

Format of campaign

This campaign will fully harness all the new media technologies and uses storytelling, press releases, fact sheets, interactive media, Facebook, blogs, websites, live streaming and video web sites. To focus on how things are done and get done IN Aruba, we will provide short videos on Facebook and YouTube. Fact sheets, tool kits and informational materials will be made available online, and we will also strive to get printed media coverage through in-depth articles and interviews.

Press and general inquiries

For more information, or how to sponsor our activities, or to participate and collaborate with us, please contact us by phone/WhatsApp at +297 7478280, or email address ecoaruba@yahoo.com.



U.S. airlines say they've reached a turning point in recovery

By DAVID KOENIG

AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — U.S. airlines say they have hit a turning point: After a lousy first quarter, they expect to be profitable as Americans return to travel in the biggest numbers since the start of the pandemic.

American Airlines is the latest carrier to give a rosy outlook for the rest of 2022. American said Thursday that although it lost \$1.64 billion in the first quarter, sales hit a record in March, and the company expects to earn a profit in the second quarter.

"Demand is as strong as we have ever seen it," American CEO Robert Isom told analysts.

Shares of American and other airlines rose in morning trading.

American's upbeat view echoed similar comments from Delta Air Lines and United Airlines, which both predicted in recent days that they will earn full-year profits despite big losses in the first quarter.

Air travel was subdued in January and February by the omicron variant that caused an increase in COVID-19 cases among both travelers and airline employees. But travelers came back in March, and airline executives believe that Americans are eager to travel this summer and



American Airlines passenger jets prepare for departure, Wednesday, July 21, 2021, near a terminal at Boston Logan International Airport, in Boston.

won't be discouraged by another, smaller uptick in coronavirus cases and higher airfares.

The recovery is being powered by leisure travelers, but the airlines say they are seeing more business travelers. American said overall business travel is 80% of pre-pandemic levels, dragged down by corporate travel, which is only 50% of 2019 levels. Isom said, however, that corporate bookings are the highest they have been since the start of the pandemic, "and we expect that to continue as more companies reopen

their offices."

Along with higher revenue, however, airlines face higher costs for fuel and labor. American's fuel bill more than doubled from a year earlier, and payroll costs rose more than 15%.

Airlines are also facing a limited supply of pilots, which could limit their ability to operate as many flights as they would like.

"The pilot shortage for the industry is real, and most airlines are simply not going to be able to realize their capacity plans because there simply aren't enough pilots, at least not for the

next five-plus years," United CEO Scott Kirby told analysts Thursday.

American said it has hired 1,100 pilots since the start of last year. Many of those came from smaller, regional airlines, leaving those carriers with shortages. As a result, American will trim its American Eagle schedule in the second quarter.

American's passenger-carrying capacity will also be lower than planned because deliveries of new Boeing 787 jets has been delayed by production problems at Boeing factories. American reported a

bigger first-quarter loss than a year ago, when it lost \$1.25 billion. The Fort Worth, Texas-based airline said that excluding special items it lost \$2.32 a share, slightly better than the average forecast of an adjusted loss of \$2.43 per share, according to a Zacks Investment Research survey. Revenue rose to \$8.9 billion.

Alaska Air Group, the parent of Alaska Airlines, said Thursday that it lost \$143 million in the first quarter, compared with a \$131 million loss a year earlier. Revenue more than doubled to \$1.68 billion but was down 10% from the same quarter in 2019.

The Seattle-based carrier forecast that second-quarter revenue will be 5% to 8% higher than in the same quarter of 2019.

After the market closed on Thursday, United Airlines Holdings reported Wednesday a \$1.38 billion loss for the first quarter but said it expects to return to profitability in the April-to-June quarter. Revenue of \$7.67 billion was up from a year ago but down 21% from early 2019, as the airline continues to run fewer flights than before the pandemic.

In morning trading, United shares gained 12%, American rose 6%, Delta Air Lines rose 5% and Alaska gained 2%. □

Associated Press

Amazon extends Prime perks to merchant sites

By HALELUYA HADERO

Associated Press

Amazon is extending the benefits of a Prime subscription to online stores beyond its own site, a move geared toward boosting revenue from merchant fees and expanding its logistics footprint.

The company said Thursday the new service it calls "Buy with Prime," will initially be available by invitation for merchants who ship their products using Amazon's warehouse and delivery services. Then, it will be rolled out for merchants who don't sell on Amazon

or use its delivery services.

Amazon.com Inc. said the service will only be available for U.S. customers. Launched in 2005, Prime has more than 200 million members worldwide who pay \$139 a year, or \$14.99 a month, for faster shipping and other perks, such as free delivery and returns. The company said Prime members using "Buy with Prime" would be able to see the Prime logo on eligible products on a merchant's site and make purchases using the payment and shipping information stored in their Amazon ac-

count. Merchants who use the service will pay various fees, which the retailer says are calculated depending on what sellers use. "With no fixed subscription fee or long-term contract required, merchants can expand selection or cancel at any time," it said.

Bob O'Donnell, the chief analyst at TECHanalysis Research, says the expansion will open more doors for businesses to use Amazon services without selling on the retailer's third-party marketplace, which has long faced accusations of undercutting merchants



by making "knock-offs," or very similar products, and boosting their presence on the site.

"If I'm a merchant, and I really don't want to deal with the hassle of shipping and logistics and returns and all that kind of stuff, this becomes a very attractive option without having to actually sell on Amazon," O'Donnell said.

Amazon's growing logis-

tics arm aims to further compete with major carriers like UPS, FedEx and the U.S. Postal Service, though some are speculating Thursday's announcement could have also been geared toward blunting the momentum of the Canadian e-commerce company Shopify, which makes software that allows businesses to set up their online stores. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

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Yesterday's answer

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- 17 Sway
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- 33 Like colanders
- 39 Copying
- 41 Chaotic spot

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4-22

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-22

CRYPTOQUOTE

LBQE O ZOMYS VCCDQP UJKD

JS SBQ QJMSB. YSJEPOEH CE

SBQ XCCE. O KMOQP. — JVJE

YBQRJMP

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WHAT'S THE USE OF A FINE HOUSE IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A TOLERABLE PLANET TO PUT IT ON? — HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Smart-home devices could save you money on home insurance

By SARAH SCHLICHTER
of NerdWallet

A smart thermostat can turn up the heat in your home before you roll out of bed. A smart speaker can play your favorite podcasts with a voice command. A smart lightbulb can be turned on or off from across the room. But smart-home devices aren't just about convenience. Because some of them can help keep your home safe and secure, they could also earn you a discount on your homeowners insurance.

DISCOUNTS FOR SMART-HOME DEVICES

NerdWallet reached out to a dozen insurance companies and found that most of them offer discounts to homeowners with smart-home devices designed to prevent water damage, fire or theft. In our research, we found companies advertising homeowners insurance discounts up to 13%, depending on the device and where you live. Among the companies we



In this Sept. 20, 2017, file photo the Nest Secure alarm system is seen on display during an event in San Francisco.

Associated Press

surveyed, the smart devices most commonly eligible for discounts were water leak sensors, security cameras and smoke detectors. However, insurers like Farmers and Lemonade also offer savings for smart locks, while Amica and Farmers give discounts for motion sensors.

Some insurers have partnered with smart-home technology companies to make the devices more affordable or even provide them for free. For example, State Farm policyholders in

most states can sign up for three years of free Ting service. Ting provides a plug-in that monitors your home for electrical problems that could cause fires.

Hippo, a homeowners insurance startup, gives policyholders in eligible states free smart home-monitoring kits from partners such as Kangaroo and SimpliSafe. As long as the policyholder installs the devices and keeps them active, they can save up to 13% on their homeowners insurance. □

U.S. drone company Zipline starts delivering medicine in Japan



In this photo provided by Zipline, a drone makes a package drop during a demonstration at Zipline's Northern California hub in 2021.

Associated Press

By YURI KAGEYAMA
AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Zipline, an American company that specializes in using autonomously flying drones to deliver medical supplies, has taken off in Japan.

They're flying, starting Thursday, across the tiny Goto Islands, off the western coast of Kyushu, in southwestern Japan, delivering to pharmacies and hospitals.

Other parts of Japan may follow, including urban areas, although the biggest needs tend to be in isolated rural areas.

Zipline, founded six years ago, already is in service in the U.S., where it has partnered with Walmart Inc. to deliver other products at the retail chain as well as drugs. It is also delivering medical goods in Ghana and Rwanda. □

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24/7

Rates for measles, other vaccinations dip for kindergartners

By **LINDSEY TANNER**
AP Medical Writer

A smaller portion of U.S. children got routine vaccinations required for kindergarten during the pandemic, government researchers said Thursday, raising concerns that measles and other preventable diseases could increase. Rates were close to 94% for measles, whooping cough and chickenpox vaccinations for the 2020-21 school year. That was down 1% from a year earlier and means 35,000 U.S. children entered kindergarten without evidence that they were vaccinated for extremely contagious diseases, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a report. In addition, almost 400,000 fewer children than expected entered kindergarten and their vaccination status is uncertain, the CDC said. Pandemic-related disruptions likely contributed to the decline, the report said, as pediatricians canceled non-emergency appointments, parents skipped checkups for their children and vaccine requirements were eased for students doing remote learning. "We haven't seen outbreaks and that's probably representative of the fact that families were staying home during the pandem-



This Friday, May 17, 2019 file photo shows a vial of a measles, mumps and rubella vaccine in Mount Vernon, Ohio.

Associated Press

ic," said Dr. Georgina Peacock, the CDC's director of immunization services. But authorities worry that could change if kids remain behind on their shots as more people return to normal routines. Data for the current school year, due in November, should indicate whether the lag persisted, said the CDC's Shannon Stokley. The data come from schools' reports on vaccination rates in 47 states plus Washington, D.C. The CDC said staffing shortages and other pandemic disruptions could have led to incomplete or absent school reports, a limitation

in assessing the true vaccination rates. In 16 states, rates for kids entering kindergarten were at least 95% for measles shots and for the combination diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough shot.

The rates were below 90% for the combined whooping cough shot in eight states plus Washington, D.C., and in seven states plus Washington, D.C., for measles shots. For chickenpox vaccinations, 17 states had rates of at least 95% and nine plus Washington, D.C., had rates below 90%. □



Marriott Aruba Surf Club PLATINUM SEASON

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2 Bed Oceanside \$18,500
2 Bed Ocean view \$17,500
2 Bed Garden view \$15,500
3 Bed Ocean view \$28,000
WK 51 Garden view \$42,500
WK 52 Oceanside \$55,000
WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
2 Bed Oceanside \$11,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$8,000
2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

2 Bed Oceanfront \$31,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$18,500
1 Bed ocean front \$17,500
1 Bed ocean view \$12,000
GOLD SEASON
2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$9,500
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Assistant Director
Xiomara Arends
Editors
<p>Pilar Flores Richard Brooks</p>
Sales
Sulaika Croes
Classifieds
classified@cspnv.com
Distribution and Collection
accounting@bondia.com
Social / Website
Juan Luis Pinto
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Anthony Croes
<p>Weststraat 22 T: 582-7800 E: news@arubatoday.com W: www.arubatoday.com @arubatoday</p>

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Nicolas Cage faces off with a new foe: Himself

By JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — “Metropolis.” Bruce Lee. Woody Woodpecker. A pet cobra. All of these things have been inspirations behind Nicolas Cage performances — sometimes private homages that the actor has used like blueprints to build some of his most exaggerated, erratic and affecting characters.

A conversation with Cage, likewise, pulls from a wide gamut of sources. In a recent and typically wide-ranging interview ahead of the release of “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent,” Cage touched on Picasso, Elia Kazan, Timothée Chalamet and Francis Bacon. A book of interviews with Bacon, “The Brutality of Fact,” for instance, helped Cage define his attraction to intense, even grotesque performance — “that which is not obviously beautiful,” he says — rather than naturalism.

“And I’ve kind of approached my public perception, as well as the way I design my film work, as an actor with that concept in mind — to not be afraid to be ugly in behavior or even in appearance,” says Cage. “To create a kind of taste that you have to discover.”

With more than 100 films, the 58-year-old Cage — an Oscar-winner (“Leaving Las Vegas”), an action star (“Con Air”) and the source of countless Internet memes for his most theatrical moments in films like “Face/Off” — has long been one of the most particular tastes in movies. Yet by being “an amateur surrealist,” as he refers to himself, Cage has emerged — even after resorting to a string of VOD releases to pay off back taxes and get himself out of debt — as one of Hollywood’s most widely loved stars. As “Unbearable Weight” director Tom Gormican says, “the sight of his face sort of makes people happy.”

But for even the mercurial Cage, “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent,” which opens in theaters Fri-



Nicolas Cage poses for a portrait to promote “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent” in New York on April 9, 2022.

day, represents something different. In it, Cage plays himself. Or, rather, he plays a fun-house mirror version of himself that sometimes interacts with a younger version of himself. The movie is one big homage to Cage in which the actor somehow manages to both satirize perceptions of himself and act out those personas sincerely.

“No matter how broad or what some folk like to call over the top, it had genuine feeling.”

But what to Cage constitutes over the top? This is the actor who, channeling Nosferatu in “Vampire’s Kiss,” gave one of the most bonkers recitals of the alphabet ever heard. He’s fond of answering: “Well, show me where the top is and I’ll tell you if I’m over it.” “I grew up in a house where my mom would do things that if you put it in a movie, you would say that was over the top,” says Cage, whose mother, Joy Coppola, was a dancer and choreographer. His father, August Coppola, brother of Francis, was a professor of literature. “But what is the top? When you want to design something and you think about different styles — naturalism, impressionism, surrealism, abstract — then you start to look

at it in a different way. It’s not going to be for everybody and it’s not necessarily going to sell tickets. But that’s OK.” “Movies are a business and it was not without peril that I took this path, but it was important to me,” he adds. “I stuck by it and, sure, I got plenty of rotten tomatoes thrown in my face. But I knew that was going to happen so it wasn’t anything I didn’t expect.”

But what’s unusual about Cage is that many of those experiments HAVE sold tickets. A lot of them. Cage’s films account for nearly \$5 billion in worldwide box office. Still, it’s been a while since he was front-and-center in a major studio film. “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent,” which Lionsgate premiered at South by Southwest to warm reviews, allows him to play around with the notion of a comeback. In the film, he’s desperate to score better parts than the birthday party he’s been offered \$1 million to attend. The movie was an opportunity to wrestle — usually comically, sometimes physically — with his own exaggerated mythology.

“He would come up to me and say, (lowers voice) ‘Tom, there’s a guy who wears rings and leather

jackets and he lives in Las Vegas and he would never say that line,’” recalls Gormican. “And I would go, ‘Oh, you mean you.’ He’d say, ‘Yes.’ And I’d be like, ‘Well, it’s not you. It’s a character based on you.’ And he’d go, ‘But he has my name.’ I was like, ‘Come on, man, just say the line.’”

“We’d have discussions about who understood Nick Cage more,” adds Gormican, laughing.

Gormican was initially turned down several times by Cage before a heartfelt letter finally convinced the actor to make the film. The issue was that Cage, even at his most outlandish, has never put quotation marks around his performances. He tends to invest fully in even the most unhinged characters. (Werner Herzog’s “Bad Lieutenant: Port of New Orleans” comes to mind.) Cage initially feared Gormican’s film would be self-mocking parody, and while it has those elements, Cage steers it in more unpredictable directions.

“Without mentioning names, there were some actors that came out of the gate that I thought were really sincere and profoundly emotional and honest in the beginning and then became too high on their

own supply,” Cage says. “They started winking at the audience and, in my opinion, it lost the emotional connection. It’s a slippery slope when you make the decision that you want to be emotional and raw.”

The actor does reach some gonzo heights in the film. After one scene, Gormican was honored to hear Cage say: “That was the Full Cage. You got the Full Cage.” Another scene features the two Cages making out, after which the younger exclaims, “Nick Cage smooches good!”

Cage’s own exotic tastes — he once had to return a dinosaur skull he purchased that had been stolen from Mongolia — have contributed to his legend. But he insists that he is normal in his life so that he can be extreme in his work — and that some of his self-promotion, like an infamously nutty appearance on “Wogan,” was itself an act. Cage last year married Riko Shibata, his fifth wife, and they are expecting a child. (Cage also has two grown sons; a sticking point in “Unbearable Weight” was that he not be shown as an absentee father — one fiction Cage wouldn’t permit.) After an unusually introspective press tour for the film, Cage is looking forward to returning to the desert outside Las Vegas, where he lives. He could use a break from “Nick Cage.”

But “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent” wraps a chapter for the actor. He’s finally out of the red after making some 30 video-on-demand films over the last decade to pay off the IRS and his creditors. He makes no apologies for those films. They made him a better actor, he says.

“I was practicing. I managed to keep my access to my imagination at my fingertips. It was a much better way for me to get this financial crisis off my back than doing something like a Super Bowl commercial — and believe me they offered,” says Cage. “That was also a point for me, that I’m not a salesman, I’m an actor.” □

Kyle Busch steadily cementing a Hall of Fame NASCAR career

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — A cascade of boos rained down on Kyle Busch following his surprise win at Bristol Motor Speedway, a moment that reminded him of the icy reception the late Dale Earnhardt received after a controversial 1999 win at the track.

But this wasn't even close to that. Earnhardt wrecked leader Terry Labonte out of his way and shrugged it off: "I didn't mean to turn him around, I meant to rattle his cage."

Busch had done nothing of the sort. He was comfortably in third on the final lap of Sunday night's race at dirt-covered track. It was Chase Briscoe who spun into leader Tyler Reddick, and all Busch did was slip through the smoke for the 60th victory of his Cup Series career.

With the checkered flag in his hand, Busch laughed at the crowd reaction: "I mean, man, I feel like Dale Earnhardt Sr. right now. This is awesome. I didn't do anything."

What the crowd didn't realize is that Busch's ninth career Cup win at Bristol had just earned him a spot in NASCAR's record books. The victory tied Busch with Hall of Famer Richard Petty with at least one win in 18 consecutive seasons.



Driver Kyle Busch celebrates after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race, Sunday, April 17, 2022, in Bristol, Tenn.

"To me, it's a long time, 18 years," he said. "The biggest thing to me is just having that opportunity and being thankful for my chances with Joe Gibbs Racing."

Busch thanked longtime sponsors M&M's and Interstate Batteries, as well as the leadership at JGR beginning with Hall of Fame team owner Joe Gibbs for "having my back over this long a time, keeping me in the seat."

Busch ranks ninth on the all-time wins list, but the Bristol win moved him 17 victories away from the Earnhardt, the late seven-time champion and member of the first NASCAR Hall of Fame class alongside Petty. Kevin Harvick, with 58 career

Cup victories, is closest to Busch among active drivers; Busch, a two-time Cup champion, is the only active driver with multiple titles.

His journey started first with Jack Roush, who had older brother Kurt Busch under contract, and Kurt swore the driver seven years his junior was going to be better than him. Roush gave Kyle Busch some Truck Series starts when he was 16, but by the time he turned 18 and was approved to race at higher levels, he'd been snagged by Hendrick Motorsports.

Busch won with Hendrick but he was immature and, like his big brother, rather temperamental. He lasted just three seasons before

Rick Hendrick cut him loose to sign Dale Earnhardt Jr. Gibbs grabbed the 22-year-old ahead of the 2008 season and Busch has undoubtedly put together a Hall of Fame career. He has 325 victories across NASCAR's three national series and "retired" from Xfinity Series racing at the end of last season when he crossed the 100-win threshold with 102.

He still races the five Truck Series events NASCAR permits for his Kyle Busch Motorsports team, though he is winless through his first three starts this season.

Now 36 and awaiting the birth of his second child — Busch and wife, Samantha, have publicly struggled with infertility and are ex-

pecting their first daughter via a surrogate — Busch's focus is on winning more Cup titles.

He knows he backed into the Bristol win, his first in a season that has six top-10 finishes through nine races. He doesn't believe the No. 18 Toyota team is where it needs to be to contend for the title just yet.

"We got a lot of work to do to win more races and be in contention each and every week," Busch said. "I feel like I'm in the prime of my career and I would love to be running up front and dominating and winning races and contending for championships. That's our ultimate goal."

Next up is Talladega Superspeedway, where Busch has just one victory, in 2008. He's not counting on past experience in what should be a hectic race with NASCAR's new Next Gen racecar.

"It's such a crapshoot there in the last 20, 30 or 40 laps that you never really know who is going to win, what's going to happen, and where the wreck is going to come from," Busch said. "You've just got to do what you can in order to let these races kind of fall into place, and sometimes it's just worth taking the finish that's coming to you and moving on and going to the next one." □

Associated Press

Ex-tennis pro Shriver: 'damaging' relationship with coach

LONDON (AP) — Former professional tennis player Pam Shriver, now a television commentator for ESPN and the BBC, says she "had an inappropriate and damaging relationship with my much older coach" that began when she was 17 and he was 50.

In a first-person account published Wednesday by British newspaper The Telegraph, Shriver describes a "painful and emotional journey" that included what she writes was a relationship with coach Don Candy that lasted a little more than five years.

Candy died in 2020.

"I still have conflicted feelings about Don. Yes, he and I became involved in a long and inappropriate affair. Yes, he was cheating on his wife.

But there was a lot about him that was honest and authentic. And I loved him," she says. "Even so, he was the grown-up here. He should have been the trustworthy adult."

Shriver, who is now 59, turned pro in 1979, a year after she made it to the U.S. Open singles final at age 16. She beat Martina Navratilova in the semifi-

nals before losing the title match to Chris Evert.

Shriver, who is from Maryland, would later team with Navratilova to win 21 Grand Slam trophies in women's doubles.

In Wednesday's piece, Shriver writes her "main motivation is to let people know this still goes on — a lot. I believe abusive coaching relationships are alarmingly common in sport as a whole. My particular expertise, though, is in tennis, where I have witnessed dozens of instances in my four-and-a-bit decades as a player and commenta-



Pam Shriver speaks during a news conference introducing the 2015 inductees to the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, R.I., Saturday, July 18, 2015.

Associated Press

tor."

"Every time I hear about a player who is dating their coach, or I see a male physio working on a female body in the gym, it sets my alarm bells ringing," she

says.

Shriver says coming forward may help some younger players and "help coaches to understand that they need to not cross that boundary." □

Record 8 teams head into NFL draft without 1st-round pick

By JOSH DUBOW
AP Pro Football Writer

The Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams should have plenty of company sitting out the first round of the NFL draft next week.

The franchise that hasn't made a selection in round one since taking Jared Goff in 2016 and doesn't currently have another first-round pick until 2024, is set to be joined by a record seven other teams that have traded away their first-round picks in what has become a growing trend in recent years.

Whether it's teams emulating the Rams' model of flipping uncertain picks for cost-controlled rookies for more proven veterans with more lucrative contracts or others that followed the path Kansas City and Buffalo used by trading future first-round picks to move up to take a future franchise quarterback, teams are opting out of the first round of the draft at a furious pace.

This will mark the third time in four years that at least seven teams won't make a pick in the first round barring one of those teams trading back up, something that happened just twice in the first 52 years of the common draft.

Former Tampa Bay general manager and SiriusXM analyst Mark Dominik said the increased salary cap, more



Denver Broncos new starting quarterback Russell Wilson, center, is flanked by coach Nathaniel Hackett, right, and general manager George Paton after a news conference March 16, 2022, in Englewood, Colo.

power for players and GMs willing to take more risks have led to the change.

"I think that's the unique thing is because players are actually getting a little bit more aggressive in their stance and clubs are willing to do that," Dominik said. "Twenty years ago, if you tried to cross (former Chiefs GM) Carl Peterson you'd never play football again. ... That mentality has kind of gone in the league. That's why you've seen more first-round draft picks moved and traded because clubs are willing to do that."

"Therefore, having a known

commodity, especially because some of these guys are elite, is better than having that first-round pick that you're hoping is what you can be."

No one has been as aggressive as the Rams. GM Les Snead traded two first-round picks to move up to take quarterback Jared Goff in 2016, another first for receiver Brandin Cooks in 2018, traded out of the first round in 2019 for more picks, dealt two more first-rounders to acquire All-Pro cornerback Jalen Ramsey and two more for quarterback Matthew Stafford.

It added up to a Super Bowl-winning roster last season.

"The model is working," Snead said. "It's allowing us to consistently win games, consistently contend for the NFC West. We'll try to use our picks in an innovative, creative way, and sometimes it will be picking players in the draft and sometimes it will be using them to go acquire players."

The aggressiveness by the Rams has rubbed off on other teams, looking to match the success Los Angeles has had in recent

years. Broncos coach Nathaniel Hackett said there's never "too high of a price on anybody that's great" — especially when it comes to quarterbacks. Denver had been dealing with a revolving door of mediocrity at the most important position ever since Peyton Manning retired seven years ago but now has Russell Wilson in place.

Of the eight teams that have given away their first-round picks this year, the Broncos were one of six who did it in trades for quarterbacks along with the Rams, Cleveland (Deshaun Watson), San Francisco (Trey Lance), Indianapolis (Carson Wentz) and Chicago (Justin Fields).

The other teams to do it were Las Vegas and Miami, who both traded top picks away to add game-breaking receivers they hope can get more out of their existing quarterbacks with the Raiders getting Davante Adams from Green Bay and the Dolphins getting Tyreek Hill from Kansas City.

After making 11 picks in the top 100 of the past two drafts to rebuild the roster, Miami now is not scheduled to pick until No. 102 after using those picks to move up in the draft last year to take receiver Jaylen Waddle and tackle Liam Eichenberg and then the deal for Hill. □



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain arrives in the paddock at the Dino and Enzo Ferrari racetrack, in Imola, Italy, Thursday, April 21, 2022.

By ROB HARRIS
AP Global Soccer Writer
LONDON (AP) — The crowded field to buy Chelsea now features 23-time

Grand Slam winner Serena Williams and seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton. A long-standing fan of Ar-

Lewis Hamilton, Serena Williams part of bid to buy Chelsea

senal, Hamilton has seized the opportunity to invest in its London rival as three bidders try to buy the Premier League club from sanctioned Russian owner Roman Abramovich.

Williams and Hamilton are part of a consortium that features proposed investment from Josh Harris and David Blitzer, the owners of the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers who would have to sell their stakes in Premier League club Crystal Palace to buy Chelsea.

The reigning world and European champions could

be sold for 3 billion pounds (\$4 billion) — a record in world sports — given the interest in the west London club. Representatives for Hamilton said he planned to invest more than 10 million pounds (\$13 million) in the bid being fronted by former Liverpool and British Airways chairman Martin Broughton and World Athletics president Sebastian Coe. Another bid has seen Boston Celtics co-owner Steve Pagliuca partner with Larry Tanenbaum, who has ownership stakes in Toronto with the NBA's Raptors, the

NHL's Maple Leafs and the city's MLS team. Peter Guber, a part-owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers, is also backing in the group.

A New York-based merchant bank, the Raine Group, has been overseeing the sale process that was announced last month by Abramovich following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The oligarch has been sanctioned by Britain and the European Union over his links to Russian President Vladimir Putin with assets frozen, including Chelsea. □